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SECOND CLASS

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Vendors debate more rigid garage door opener safety

State, federal laws could mandate changes

By John Caulfield

NATIONAL REPORT — Leading manufacturers were scheduled to meet with officials from Underwriters Laboratories on Sept. 27 to determine if current standards governing garage door opener safety need to be upgraded.

Concerns about the equipment's safety are being raised by state and federal legislators who have either passed laws or have statutes pending that would impose mandatory standards on suppliers.

For consumers, the cost of this added safety has yet to be determined. However, industry officials are resigned to the likelihood that voluntary or mandatory standards will cause the current $150 average price point for an opener to rise.

States take action

Since 1982, when U.L. standard 325 was updated to require auto-reverse and contact-sensitive features on all garage door systems, there have been 45 equipment-related deaths. But only three were caused by equipment made after the guidelines change.

According to data projected nationally from local and regional samples by the National Emergency Information Surveillance System (NEISS), there were 2,176 persons treated in hospital emergency rooms and released for injuries involving garage doors in 1989.

That compares with 514,738 persons treated for injuries or deaths involving bicycles,

(Continued on page 102)

Concerns about garage door opener safety have prompted legislation that could impose mandatory standards on suppliers. NHCN photo

Market slowdown, competition hammer specialty tool dealers

Survivors stress contractor sales

NHCN photo

A special-order tub is merchandised alongside ladders at this Totowa, N.J., Toolathon.

By John Sinisi

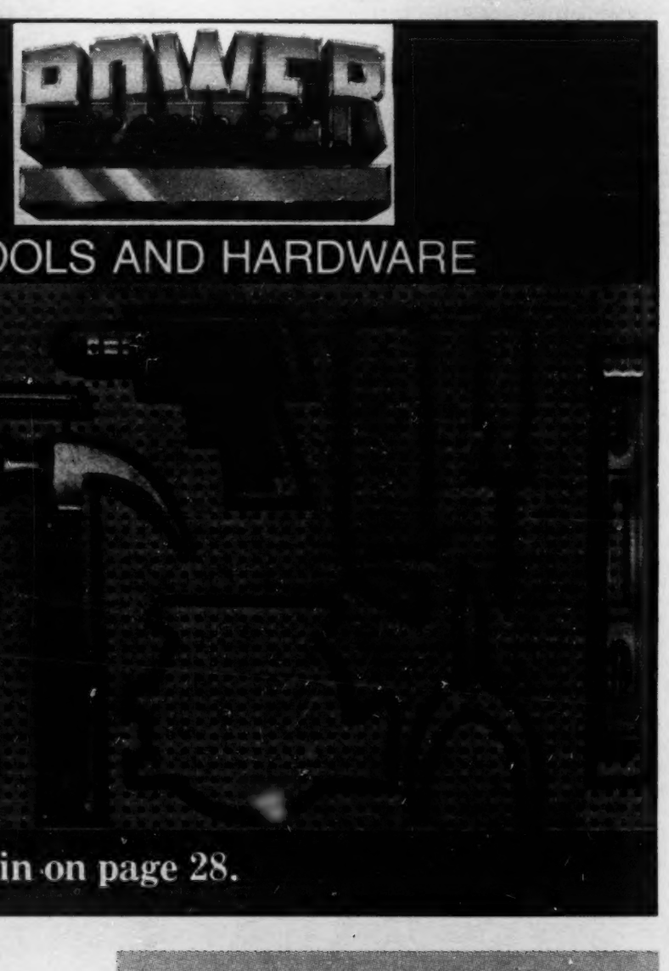
PARAMUS, N.J. — "The Great Tool Way" could, at one time, have been a fitting epithet for this state's Route 17.

Cutting through one of the nation's most densely populated areas, the highway is lined with retailers of every stripe. Among these have been a number of specialty tool stores, including units operated by two of the industry's largest specialty dealers, Toolathon and U.S. General.

But currently, only the smaller tool specialists remain:

- Toolathon, which pulled off of Route 17 in 1988, has scaled down to one 20,000-square-foot store in nearby Totowa and a 4,000-square-foot franchise in Bricktown, N.J.;

(Continued on page 98)



Stories begin on page 28.

84 Lumber reshuffles ranks of key execs

By an NHCN staff editor

EIGHTY-FOUR, Pa. — The winds of seasonal change that come with September blew through 84 Lumber, which made several key management switches in an effort to realign its corporate ranks.

Doug Murdoch, the chain's senior executive vp who many saw as the heir apparent to 84's chairman Joe Hardy, has been reassigned to Florida to serve as the 334-unit chain's southern regional vp in Jacksonville.

John Kayea, a 19-year company veteran, has resigned as 84's vp-purchasing to become partners with the chain's former regional vp in Pittsburgh, Paul West, in the formation of Hometown Lumber, a new lumberyard located in Akron, Ohio.

And George Handyside, the chain's vp-administration and MIS, has relinquished his financial oversight responsibilities to an executive who will hold the title vp-finance for the first time in several years.

The changes became effective Sept. 15.

Neither Murdoch nor Hardy could not be reached for comment, and it could not be ascertained immediately whether Murdoch's move to Florida was at his request, as some who are knowledgeable about the company have suggested, or because Hardy's was displeased with the way he was doing the job, which Murdoch assumed about 18 months ago.

A 15-year company vet-

(Continued on page 98)

Grossman's veteran now pres. of Triangle Building Centers

By an NHCN staff editor

QUAKERTOWN, Pa. — William Van Note, a longtime executive with Grossman's, became president of Triangle Building Centers here on Oct. 1.

Van Note, 55, most recently had been senior vp-operations for the 156-unit Grossman's, Inc. in Braintree, Mass. His position has been filled by Allan Zack, formerly the chain's vp-commodities merchandising.

(Continued on page 9)

Builders Express debuts first store 25

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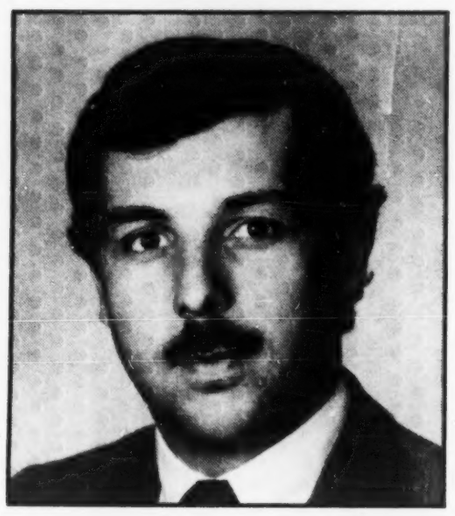
Site selection a wrestling match between the Davids and the Goliaths

Two principal real estate site selection strategies dominate home center retailing today: The David and the Goliath. The Davids concentrate on regional dominance, while the Goliaths set their sites farther afield.

For the Goliaths, the national chains, the process has become an enormous chess game. Competition for the remaining viable properties in the population-dense markets they require is escalating rapidly. . . and so are the stakes. Meanwhile, the "Davids," the premier regional chains, must work in concentrated areas with ever tighter real estate budgets.



Jay Scansaroli

$11M for one site

First, a closer look at the larger players, with their mega-stores and mega-real estate resources to match. These are the companies, many with in-house real estate teams, that can take a giant step away from home, prepare all the necessary market research, demographic analyses, computerized traffic studies and more, to locate the best sites in a given market—and take them over.

Witness Home Depot's reported $11 million purchase of the TSS Seedman, Elmont, N.Y., lease. Although the lease has very favorable terms, the staggering sum speaks volumes about the Atlanta-based operation's viability—and willingness—to pay the price for prime real estate. With this densely populated, middle-income site wedged between New York City and Long Island, the Depot has positioned itself well for continued expansion in the New York metropolitan market.

Or, observe Hechinger's Home Quarters Warehouse march into Boston this fall. With its discount subsidiary expected to rapidly roll into new markets at a clip of about 10 per year for the next three years, this Rolls Royce chain is well-poised to meet the competition in the most heated arenas—like facing the Home Depot in Boston.

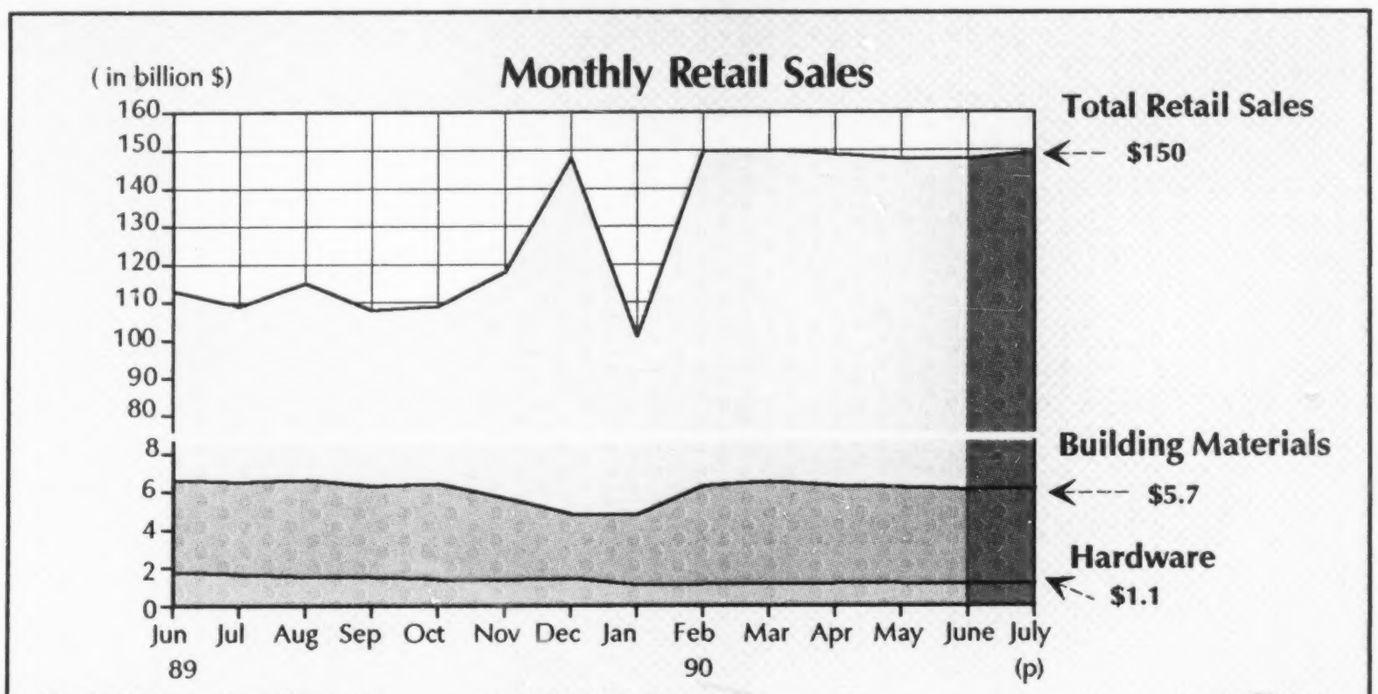
The West Coast also has its Goliaths—for instance, the HomeClub. Now 64 units strong, the Fullerton, Calif.-based chain opened a dozen warehouse stores in 1989, and targets similar growth for 1990, according to Thomas H. Cozzolino, vice president, real estate development.

HomeClub's stores span major trading areas throughout the western one-third of the country, and its new units reflect a variety of strategies— new markets, market fill-ins, as well as multi- and single-unit markets. The selection challenges, however, can be daunting given the 114,000-square-foot prototype's 8½-acre site requirement and the decreasing availability of viable land.

"That is where experience, creativity and flexibility become increasingly important," said Cozzolino, who works extensively with developers. "We have to be very careful that a site is going to work, in terms of size and operations. We don't just use our computer analyses and concentric circles; we spend a lot more time driving the market—observing traffic patterns, drive times and physical barriers." ◆

> "We have to be very careful that a site is going to work, in terms of size and operations. We don't just use our computer analyses and concentric circles; we spend a lot more time driving the market."
>
> **—Thomas H. Cozzolino,**
> *vice president, real estate*
> *HomeClub*

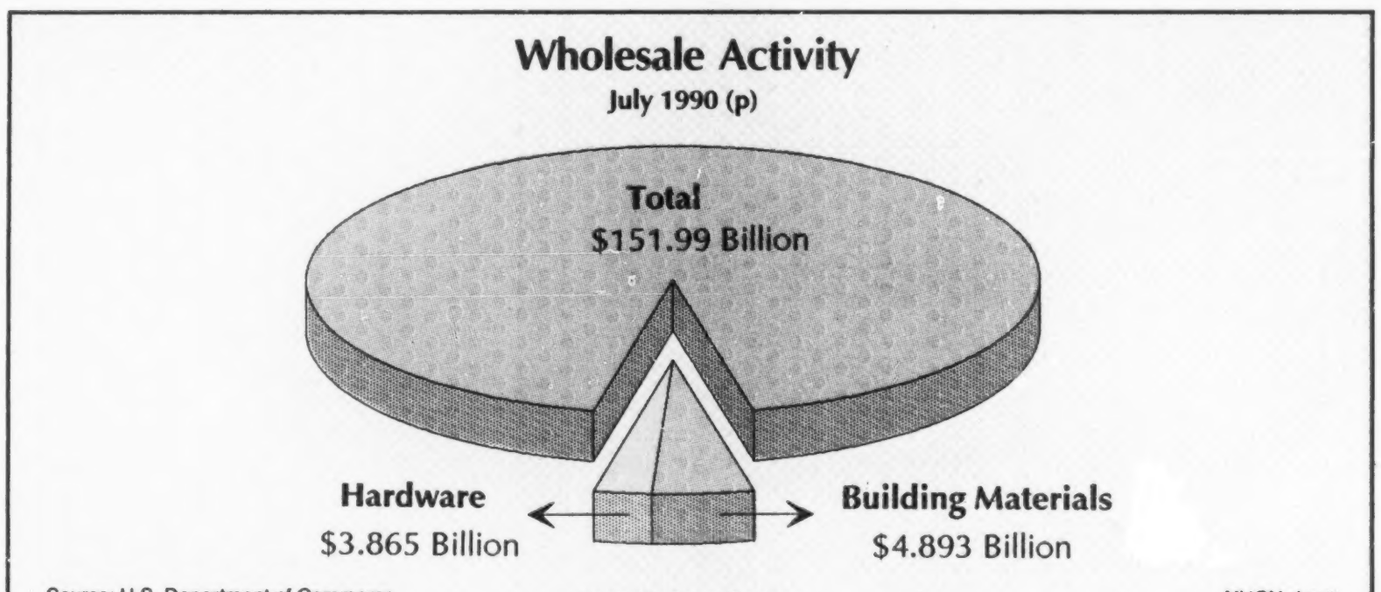
Home improvement sales of commodities and hardware in the month of July remained the same as June, according to Bureau of the Census data. Total retail sales for the month were up only slightly, to $150 billion from $149.4 billion.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce SAAR

(p) Preliminary figure

NHCN chart



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce SAAR

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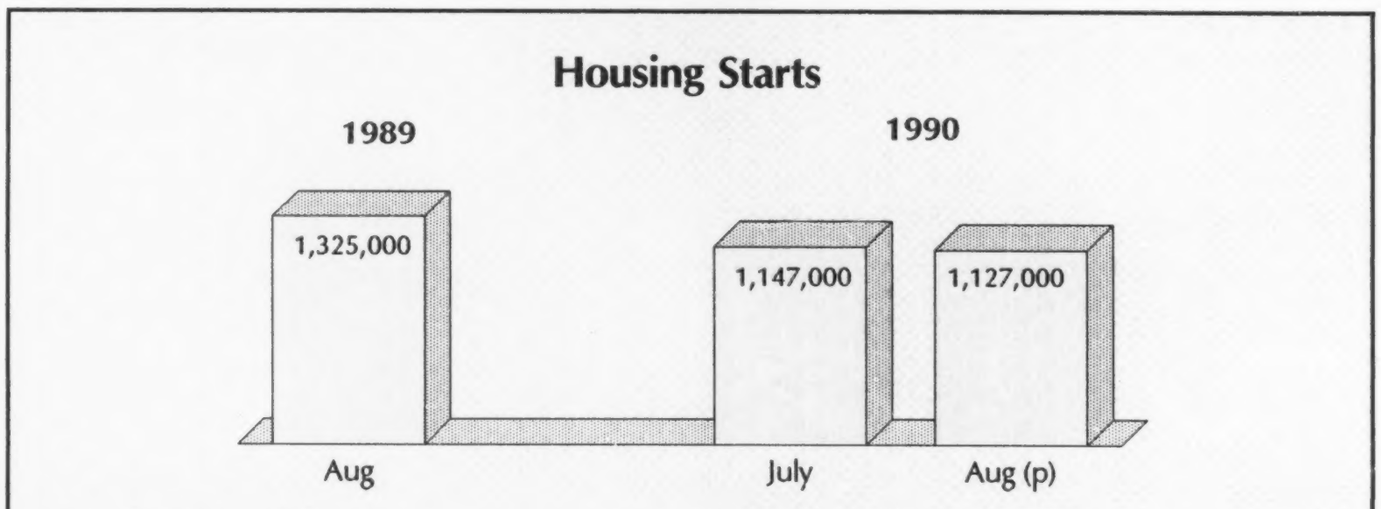
NHCN chart



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce SAAR

(p) Preliminary figure

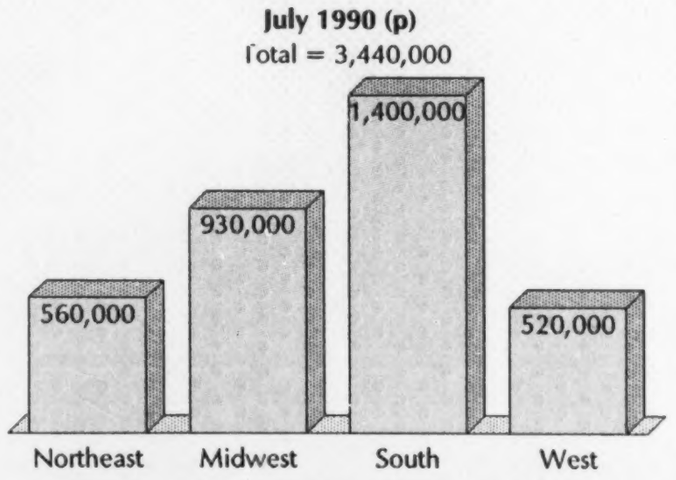
NHCN chart

Housing Affordability

	National Total	
	JULY 1989	JULY 1990 (p)
Affordability Index Composite*	**99.6**	**102.3**
Median Price Existing Home	$95,200	$98,400
Average Mortgage Rate	10.39%	10.15%
Payment as Percentage of Income	25.1%	24.4%
Median Family Income	$33,013	$34,358
Qualifying Income	$33,140	$33,579

*The affordability index is based on the five criteria listed above.

U.S. Resales



Resales in the Northeast and South were up from the previous month, by 70,000 and 90,000, respectively.

Source: National Association of Realtors
(p)Preliminary figure

NHCN Charts

Canadian Tire's net income flat, sales up 4.6 percent in 2Q

By an NHCN staff editor

TORONTO — Canadian Tire, the 416-dealer chain based here, reported flat net income for the quarter ended June 30.

In that period, sales rose 4.6 percent to $821.6 million, while earnings were down by $312,000 to $38.4 million, or 43 cents per share. (All figures are in Canadian dollars, which on Sept. 21 equaled 87 cents).

For the first half of its fiscal year, Canadian Tire's revenues rose 3.3 percent to $1.48 billion and net income increased less than 1 percent to $72.1 million, or 80 cents per share.

These figures include contributions from Canadian Tire's real estate and petroleum divisions. Its merchandise division, which encompasses the performance of its stores, saw its operating sales increase 2.8 percent, though operating earnings were off 11.1 percent.

This division's first half showed sales up 0.6 percent and earnings off 4.8 percent.

During this latest period, the company's long-term debt declined 6 percent to $5.3 million, and short-term debt was reduced 47 percent to $4.9 million. Cost of merchandise rose 5.4 percent to $738.2 million.

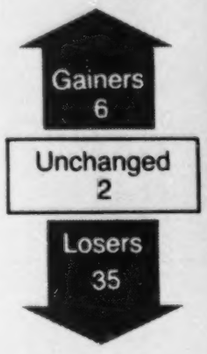
Rising crude oil prices melt stocks

The stock market continues its downward trend, plagued by fear of war in the Middle East and attendant skyrocketing of crude oil prices. Home improvement stocks got no relief from this during the two weeks ended Sept. 21.

Except for stocks selling at low prices already, most of the issues tracked for *NHCN* by Media General lost ground. Notably bucking that decline was American Woodmark, the cabinet maker, whose stock jumped nearly 12 percent, and NHD Stores, the Massachusetts chain, whose stock rose 25 percent to $5 per share.

Some stocks took major hits during this period. Catalina Lighting, the Miami-based importer, saw its shares lose more than one-third of their worth. Standard Brands, which announced a restructuring of its operation and the closing of most of its Texas stores, declined by 23 percent.

Mor-Flo and Nortek stayed at their 52-week lows. And the announcement that it would buy back $65 million of its stock had little impact on Lowe's performance.



National Home Center News®

HOME CENTER MARKET SUMMARY

Covering The Period 09/07/90 - 09/21/90

Company (Exchange)	Symbol	STOCK PRICE: High	Low	Close	Change: Amt	Pct	52-Week: High	Low	VOLUME: Total Volume This Period (100)	% Shrs. Outstanding	Average Daily Vol. Last 52 Week (100)	Average Daily Vol. This Period (100)	EARNINGS/SHARE: Last Fiscal Year $	Latest 12 Months vs Preceding 12 Months Change: Amt. $	Pct	5-Year Annual Growth Rate %	Profit Margin %	P/E: Latest P/E Ratio -	DIVIDENDS: Indicated Dvd. Rate Amt. $	Yield %	Last X-Dvd. Date	FINANCIAL POSITION: Last Fiscal Year Revenue $ Mil	Earnings $ Mil	Current Ratio -	Last Fiscal Year (Per Share): Long Term Debt $	Common Stock Equity $	Last Balance Sheet Date
Retailers																											
Gen Bldg Prods (O)	GBLD	1.00	.50	1.00	.19	23.08	3.00	.50	105	.27	16	11	-.84	-.32	S NE	NC	-4.0	NE	.00	.0	00-00-00	81.8	-3.3	4.0	5.86	3.17	1189
Grossman's Inc (O)	GROS	3.88	3.00	3.38	.25	8.00	7.13	2.75	16,432	6.29	1,610	1,643	.67	-.01	S -1.9	NC	1.7	6.6	.00	.0	00-00-00	1052.1	17.6	1.8	3.36	4.48	1289
Hechinger A (O)	HECHA	9.38	8.25	8.25	-.88	-9.59	16.50	8.00	4,015	1.96	951	402	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	.16	1.9	07-30-90	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hechinger B (O)	HECHB	9.50	8.25	8.25	-1.00	-10.81	16.50	8.25	250	.07	48	25	.88	-.21	S -18.4	5	2.5	8.9	.06	.7	07-30-90	1229.6	31.0	2.6	4.63	11.00	0190
Home Depot (N)	HD	34.75	31.25	31.63	-2.13	-6.30	43.50	20.19	49,924	6.50	4,499	4,992	.95	.38	S 47.5	55	4.1	26.8	.12	.4	08-23-90	2758.5	112.0	1.9	2.63	4.45	0190
K mart Cp (N)	KM	27.50	24.50	25.25	-2.00	-7.34	40.50	24.50	40,783	2.04	5,080	4,078	1.61	-2.12	S -56.1	2	1.1	15.2	1.72	6.8	08-10-90	29533.0	323.0	1.8	.01	.02	0190
Lowe's Cos (N)	LOW	24.63	20.50	20.75	-2.00	-8.79	49.63	20.50	12,156	3.26	1,575	1,216	2.01	.26	S 13.4	6	2.8	9.4	.52	2.5	10-11-90	2650.5	74.9	1.9	4.51	17.33	0190
NHD Stores (O)	NHDI	5.25	4.00	5.00	1.00	25.00	7.75	3.50	157	1.20	34	16	.13	-.40	S -69.0	-17	.4	27.8	.00	.0	09-16-86	55.3	.2	2.4	4.87	7.39	0190
Sears, Roebuck (N)	S	29.13	26.25	26.63	-2.13	-7.39	44.50	26.25	52,369	1.53	6,390	5,237	4.30	.56	S 19.1	-1	2.8	7.6	2.00	7.5	08-21-90	53793.9	1508.5	1.8	29.30	39.77	1289
Std Brd Pnt (N)	SBP	7.88	5.13	5.88	-1.75	-22.95	15.63	5.13	880	1.54	94	88	.36	-1.52	S -100.0	NC	1.2	NE	.00	.0	08-11-87	314.0	3.7	2.2	26.85	6.59	0190
Strober Organiz (O)	STRB	1.38	1.00	1.38	.38	37.50	5.50	1.00	122	.20	40	12	-.21	-.89	S -100.0	NC	-1.0	NE	.00	.0	00-00-00	127.7	-1.3	3.4	2.79	4.75	1289
Wolohan Lumber (O)	WLHN	14.25	12.75	12.75	-1.88	-12.82	19.53	12.75	407	.63	113	41	1.72	-.04	S -2.2	32	4.1	7.3	.28	2.2	08-27-90	272.1	11.1	3.3	4.03	9.64	1289
Wholesalers																											
Hughes Supply (N)	HUG	11.63	11.25	11.63	.25	2.20	19.88	11.13	860	1.98	62	86	1.33	-.67	S -35.8	1	1.2	9.7	.36	3.1	07-30-90	529.9	6.4	3.0	16.30	18.25	0190
Manufacturers																											
Am Consumer (O)	ACPI	5.00	5.00	5.00	-.75	-13.04	8.50	5.00	78	.31	32	8	.76	-.03	S -4.1	35	2.3	7.1	.00	.0	06-08-88	87.8	2.0	5.1	9.62	6.10	1289
Am Woodmark (O)	AMWD	4.75	4.00	4.75	.50	11.76	8.75	3.88	66	.09	41	7	.09	-1.03	Q -100.0	NC	.4	NE	.00	.0	05-24-88	154.0	.6	2.0	4.24	4.58	0490
Armstrng Wrld (N)	ACK	30.25	25.50	26.50	-3.38	-11.30	46.25	25.50	14,686	3.94	1,404	1,469	3.44	.52	S 14.9	14	6.6	6.6	1.16	4.4	08-06-90	2512.5	165.9	1.8	4.29	16.72	1289
Black & Decker (N)	BDK	13.13	10.50	10.63	-2.25	-17.48	24.00	10.50	17,391	2.82	2,703	1,739	.51	-2.00	S -100.0	NC	.9	NE	.40	3.8	09-10-90	3190.3	30.0	1.3	44.64	12.23	0989
Boise Cascade (N)	BCC	30.38	26.38	26.75	-3.63	-11.93	46.25	25.75	10,426	2.75	1,329	1,043	6.19	-2.62	S -39.1	30	6.2	6.6	1.52	5.7	09-10-90	4338.0	267.6	1.4	38.34	32.56	1289
Catalina Lghtg (A)	LTG	4.50	2.88	2.88	-1.63	-36.11	13.88	2.88	1,750	3.46	222	175	.63	.07	N 12.5	NC	4.8	4.6	.00	.0	00-00-00	54.6	2.6	1.8	.24	4.58	0989
Champ Intl (N)	CHA	27.50	25.63	25.88	-1.50	-5.48	34.38	25.63	24,579	2.64	3,028	2,458	4.56	-1.48	S -30.0	NC	8.4	7.5	1.10	4.3	09-11-90	5163.2	432.4	1.3	21.78	38.60	1289
Cooper Indus (N)	CBE	37.75	35.38	35.63	-1.25	-3.39	47.00	32.63	17,158	1.57	2,162	1,716	2.51	.29	S 12.2	17	5.2	13.4	1.08	3.0	09-11-90	5129.4	267.8	1.6	16.82	24.75	1289
DeSoto Inc (N)	DSO	44.00	42.38	42.38	-1.25	-2.87	48.38	28.00	1,915	4.71	508	192	-2.53	-1.06	S NE	NC	-2.5	NE	.40	.9	10-03-90	408.2	-10.2	1.3	12.30	21.21	1289
Georgia Pacific (N)	GP	38.75	36.13	36.25	-2.00	-5.23	62.00	36.13	27,982	3.28	2,535	2,798	7.42	.21	S 3.4	41	6.5	5.8	1.60	4.4	08-13-90	10171.0	661.0	2.0	27.00	31.40	1289
La Pacific (N)	LPX	30.75	27.00	27.38	-3.25	-10.61	45.25	27.00	10,489	2.78	989	1,049	5.04	.57	S 13.9	43	9.6	5.8	1.08	3.9	08-08-90	2009.5	192.6	3.6	13.93	30.95	1289
Macmillan Bloedel (O)	MMBLF	14.13	13.75	14.13	.00	.00	17.25	13.50	2,291	.22	356	229	1.96	-.95	S -42.2	NC	7.5	10.9	.80	5.7	11-16-90	2826.8	213.0	11.7	1.45	10.86	1288
Manville Cp (N)	MVL	6.88	6.38	6.38	-.38	-5.56	10.50	6.00	4,812	1.01	442	481	1.48	2.05	S NE	NC	9.0	5.1	.00	.0	00-00-00	2191.9	196.8	1.5	16.77	9.87	1289
Masco Corp (N)	MAS	19.25	18.00	18.13	-1.00	-5.23	27.63	18.00	33,301	2.14	2,865	3,330	1.42	-.59	S -31.4	5	7.0	14.1	.56	3.1	10-15-90	3150.5	220.9	2.6	7.41	11.94	1289
Mor-Flo Inds (O)	MORF	4.25	3.75	3.75	.00	.00	5.75	3.75	63	.25	10	6	-3.56	-2.08	S NE	NC	-4.2	NE	.01	.3	12-13-89	212.7	-9.0	2.0	16.50	10.05	1289
Newell Co (N)	NWL	25.88	23.25	23.38	-1.88	-7.43	35.50	18.25	6,791	1.15	1,238	679	1.41	.39	S 31.0	28	7.6	14.2	.50	2.1	08-09-90	1122.9	85.4	1.6	1.70	7.61	1289
Nortek Inc (N)	NTK	2.88	2.50	2.50	-.38	-13.04	8.38	2.50	731	.52	188	73	-2.08	-1.94	S NE	NC	-2.6	NE	.10	4.0	10-01-90	1080.2	-28.5	3.0	28.78	15.65	1289
Owens Corn (N)	OCF	19.00	17.38	17.38	-1.13	-6.08	34.88	16.75	13,281	3.16	1,003	1,328	4.08	-1.19	S -24.4	NC	5.7	4.7	.00	.0	00-00-00	3000.0	172.0	1.0	29.76	-10.78	1289
Ply-Gem (A)	PGI	6.13	5.75	5.88	-.13	-2.08	13.25	5.75	606	.58	162	61	.90	-.50	S -47.2	3	2.0	10.5	.12	2.0	08-13-90	506.8	10.1	3.6	13.74	10.26	1289
Pope & Talbot (N)	POP	17.25	15.13	15.25	-1.63	-9.63	27.75	15.13	881	.75	236	88	3.70	.43	S 13.5	NC	7.0	4.2	.72	4.7	07-24-90	618.8	43.6	1.9	5.73	16.91	1289
Potlatch Cp (N)	PCH	32.00	30.13	31.25	-.50	-1.57	44.50	30.13	3,301	1.14	421	330	4.79	.60	S 13.6	32	11.1	6.3	1.20	3.8	08-13-90	1227.6	136.7	2.7	15.89	28.74	1289
PPG Inds (N)	PPG	46.00	41.63	42.25	-3.13	-6.89	55.25	37.00	14,205	1.31	1,651	1,421	4.18	.12	S 2.8	16	8.1	9.7	1.68	4.0	08-06-90	5734.1	465.2	1.5	10.82	20.98	1289
Rep Gypsum (N)	RGC	3.63	3.38	3.50	-.13	-3.45	5.00	3.38	431	.41	50	43	.04	-.19	F -82.6	-44	.8	87.5	.00	.0	02-22-90	47.3	.4	3.6	.86	3.04	0689
Sherwin-Wms (N)	SHW	34.25	32.50	33.50	-.13	-.37	42.13	30.13	6,336	1.47	868	634	2.52	.29	S 12.1	10	5.1	12.5	.76	2.3	08-20-90	2123.5	108.9	2.0	2.43	15.48	1289
Stanley Works (N)	SWK	31.00	29.50	30.00	-.38	-1.23	40.00	28.13	3,511	.82	550	351	2.71	.08	S 3.1	9	6.0	11.2	1.20	4.0	09-04-90	1971.5	117.7	2.7	9.68	15.67	1289
Thos Inds (N)	TII	12.75	11.00	11.38	-.38	-3.19	20.88	11.00	1,131	1.10	67	113	2.02	.02	S 1.2	6	4.7	6.7	.76	6.7	08-31-90	436.6	20.6	2.4	11.47	13.59	1289
Union Camp (N)	UCC	33.63	31.75	31.75	-1.63	-4.87	39.75	31.00	8,193	1.19	1,607	819	4.35	-.73	S -16.0	23	10.8	8.3	1.56	4.9	08-28-90	2761.3	299.4	2.0	10.06	25.49	1289
USG (N)	USG	2.38	1.75	2.13	-.13	-5.56	5.63	1.75	14,531	2.63	966	1,453	.51	-.60	S -57.1	NC	1.3	4.7	.00	.0	00-00-00	2191.0	28.0	.9	41.75	-26.55	1289
Waxman Inds (N)	WAX	4.75	4.25	4.25	-.50	-10.53	11.00	3.88	2,646	2.67	120	265	.70	-.10	F -12.5	25	1.5	6.1	.12	2.8	08-31-90	448.7	6.8	2.5	21.17	2.94	0689
Weyerhaeuser (N)	WY	21.38	20.13	20.25	-.63	-2.99	31.75	20.13	38,451	1.88	3,577	3,845	1.56	-1.58	S -55.2	13	3.4	15.8	1.20	5.9	07-30-90	10105.6	341.1	1.4	18.21	20.26	1289

All Data are based on sources believed to be reliable, but its accuracy is not guaranteed. Every effort will be made to correct errors, when discovered, in future issues.

Reporting period
3 mos.—First quarter of fiscal year
6 mos.—First six months of fiscal year
9 mos.—First nine months of fiscal year
Fiscal—Fiscal year
NEW—New report since last issue

Last 52 Weeks

General Field Footnotes
NA—Not available or not applicable
NC—Data required for calculation currently incomplete in our files
NE—Negative earnings invalidate calculations
NM—No meaningful figure
a—Under dividend amount, indicates a stock dividend
b—Indicates cash plus stock dividend when applied to dividend amount column

P/E Ratio—Price/earnings ratio
E.P.S.—Earnings per share

Market
N—New York Stock Exchange
A—American Stock Exchange
O—NASDAQ Over-the-Counter
M—NASDAQ National Market

*Two-week average volume equals the number of shares traded divided by the number of shares outstanding during the latest two-week period. Twelve-week average volume equals the number of shares traded divided by the number of shares outstanding over the previous 12 weeks.

All earnings data and all related calculations using earnings data use primary earnings from total operations and after taxes. Earnings are before extraordinary items, when such items are applicable.

Data and Table Provided by Media General Financial Services Inc., Richmond, Va. 23219

Wholesaler promotes need for central network

(Continued from page 3)

store personnel could draw inventory, item and price specifications for a wide range of products without having to deal with an ominous bank of computer terminals.

At this point, most dealers use computers in their stores for accounting, sales and profit tracking, project estimating and, to a growing extent, electronic data interchange (EDI) with selected vendors.

However, EDI, according to Richard Scherer, Iron City's director of MIS, remains a "passive" system that generally relies on a third party system to translate the data flowing between the dealer's and supplier's computers.

And with myriad systems being employed by companies, a virtual Tower of Babel is being constructed by the home improvement industry that Iron City's officials claim would be better served by one nationwide PSI system that used a common format and language, and was "transaction-driven," i.e., provided information needed by the customer doing a project.

Limited system in place

PSI, then, would marry the benefits of EDI to those now used by many dealers for computer-generated in-store design of kitchens, baths, decks and garages.

A modest version of this is currently offered by Iron City through its 'Pro-Cadd" system, which stands for Professional Computer Assisted Design through Delivery.

The system was introduced two years ago and has been installed in more than 230 retail outlets in 11 states, with Iron City assuming all the hardware and software costs and half of the phone line charges.

Pro-Cadd is used primarily by dealers to facilitate special ordering of windows and doors from Iron City's six distribution centers.

It is a PC-operated, interactive software package that gives the employee more help to make a sale by keeping him abreast of what inventory is available from the distributors' warehouses, and prompting questions that relate to the customer's project in terms of size, price and accessories needs.

Unanswered questions

The dealers in attendance who use Pro-Cadd swore by its efficiency. (Grossman's has 20 of its 156 stores on the system.) And Iron City officials believe its system, which it recently has had patented, could be the starting point for an industrywide PSI network.

But there are many questions that still need answering. By his timetable, Brown foresees an industry council, made up of "leading suppliers" in core product fields, to be formed by Jan. 1, 1991. (B&D and Armstrong World Industries were getting private presentations of Iron City's plan; Brown added that Weyerhaeuser has also shown interest.)

After deciding on such things as common software language and hardware, test sites of a PSI computer would be installed by next October, and a system integrating retailers would be up and running by January 1992.

Brown was quick to concede that, while Pro-Cadd was one of the first PSI systems on the market, it may not be the one the council ultimately decides to use. He also warned dealers that PSI was not a substitute for personnel training, but simply an instructional tool.

But some things are still up in the air, like which vendors would be on PSI first and would the system be exclusive to their product lines. "I would suggest that the more people with modules in the system, the better," said Brown.

The cost spectre also hovers over this whole effort, particularly after Brown stated that "something this large is going to require a large computer, and somebody's gotta pay for that."

But the dealers and manufacturers in the audience were generally supportive of at least the formation of a council.

"It's remarkable that a company the size of Iron City is taking such a stance," said Phil Skarada, the president of Your Building Centers in Altoona, Pa., which has two stores on Pro-Cadd and will soon have its other six on the system. ◆

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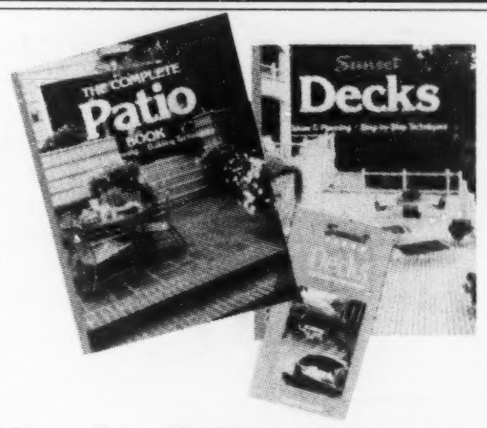

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